



Courthouse Square Boone County Indiana

Boone County was established by an act of the Legislature as an official unit of local government effective April 1, 1830.

Boone County is a rectangle, 17 1/2 miles north and south, and 24 miles east and west, encompassing 268,800 acres. Much of its surface consists of a wide, fertile, undulating plateau forming the divide between the White River and Wabash River watersheds.

On June 7, 1830, a Commission appointed by the Legislature, selected Jamestown as county seat of Boone County. January 26, 1832 the Legislature approved an act for relocating the county seat to be within two miles of the center of Boone County. Lebanon was founded, named and made the county seat, replacing Jamestown.

From the founding of Boone County in 1830 until October 1833, the county officers had no permanent home.

Since that time Boone County has had four courthouses. The first courthouse was built in 1833 at 110-112 West Washington Street, on the north side of Lebanon's public square. It was a two-story log structure, located on the site between the old jail and the alley to the west. This building served the county as its courthouse for seven years at

which time a new two-story, square brick building was built in the center of the courthouse 'park'.

This second courthouse, built in 1839-1840, only lasted sixteen years. Due to its foundation of boulders giving way, the building was torn down in 1856 with its material being used to build Lebanon's first brick business building.

The third courthouse was completed in 1857 at the cost of \$33,000 with the entire cost of construction being paid off in two years. The brick for this third courthouse was made at a farm site just north of what is now Memorial Park. This courthouse lasted one-half century plus two years.

In the summer of 1909 a Lebanon contractor began razing this third generation of Boone County Courthouses, which, with its Gothic style and spacious size, had set it apart as one of the finest and most beautiful courthouses in Indiana.

In October, 1909, the cornerstone of this present-day building was laid with impressive rites, conducted by the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Indiana. It took about two years to build this present courthouse with its classically majestic 'capitol' look. Formal occupancy was made on the morning of January 1, 1912, when the various offices and the Boone Circuit Court opened for business. Dedication of the building was made with great ceremony accompanied by gala festivities on July 4, 1912, the dedicatory address being given by Charles Warren Fairbanks, of Indianapolis, a former Vice-President of the United States.

Joseph T. Hutton, Hammond architect, kept the classic revival style of architecture well in mind when he drew the plans, giving Boone County a courthouse that not only has beauty and eye appeal, but also bespeaks an air of massive grandeur and enduring permanence. Built of Indiana limestone and granite, the building cost \$265,000 with construction being done by Caldwell & Drake, contractors of Columbus, Indiana.

The eight huge limestone pillars, four at the south entrance and four at the north, are said to be the largest one-piece limestone columns in the world. Each one is 35 feet 5 1/2 inches high, weighing thirty tons per column. The dome is exceeded in size in the state only by the one on the West Baden Hotel.

The architectural treatment of the north and south sides of the present courthouse is exactly the same, as is also true of the east and west sides. Take time to admire the beautifully executed sculpturing above the north and south portals depicting agriculture, the domestic arts, justice, industry, etc. These limestone carvings are genuine works of art.

Geographically, the courthouse sits exactly in the center of the county, east and west, but would need to be moved one-quarter mile north to be in the center, north and south.

Running north and south, the Second Principal Meridian, used as a base in surveying and describing the land of the region, cuts Boone County in half. The east and west portions each are precisely 12 miles wide. This meridian is the all important line from which the six-mile congressional townships are numbered as range lines east and west. The meridian line, of course, bisects the courthouse as well, a matter appropriately noted in the center of the rotunda floor.

The Boone County Courthouse is occupied by the judicial, executive and fiscal branches of county government. In addition to the Judges, other elected officials with offices in the Courthouse are the Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Prosecutor, Recorder, Surveyor and Treasurer as well as several other offices. All four floors are used for these offices and are accessible by stairways and elevator.

The center of the courthouse is an open round rotunda supported by eight marble pillars on each floor. The floors are laid with one-inch, six-sided marble tile. The rotunda is covered by two separate domes. The exterior dome is of opaque glass. The

interior dome is intricate stained glass design made in eight panels. Suspended in the center of the rotunda is the American flag and the Boone County Sampler. The Sampler was made in 1976 by Boone County people to record life in Boone County as it was in the nation's bicentennial year.

Atop a five-foot tall marble pedestal to the left of the southwest corner stairs arising from the rotunda is displayed a bronze bust of Stephen Neal, of Lebanon, educator, lawyer and a Judge of the Boone Circuit Court. Neal, born in 1817 and dying in Lebanon in 1905, is credited with having written the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

On a marble pedestal to the left of the northeast stairway is a bust of Daniel Webster. Mr. Webster was a famous U.S. statesman and orator who served in the House of Representatives in the early 1800's.

The county judicial system consists of three courts: Boone Circuit Court, Boone Superior Court No. 1, Boone Superior Court No. 2 and Law Library containing over 10,000 volumes. Each courtroom contains certain distinguishing features.

Boone Circuit Court is the original court of Boone County and is located in the northwest quadrant of the third floor. The courtroom is rectangular and has three windows facing west and two doorways to the rotunda. The recessed ceiling is rectangular with a stained glass skylight. On the north wall above the judge's bench is an impressive mural approximately twenty-three feet in length.

Superior Court No. 1 was established in 1965 and is located in the southeast quadrant of the third floor. This courtroom retains its original size and appears square. The space has two doorways to the rotunda and four windows to the east and four to the south. The recessed ceiling is square with a stained glass skylight.

Superior Court No. 2 is the smallest courtroom. It was established in 1986 and occupies space in

the northwest quadrant on the first floor. This room was originally set aside for the GAR. When the space was converted to the courtroom the mural on the east was preserved. The battles depicted are: Mill Springs, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Antietam, Stonesriver, Fredricksburg, Champion Hills, Vicksburg, Gettysburg and Chickamauga.

Boone County Courthouse Clocks

THE TOWER CLOCK

The clock in the tower, high above the glass dome of the courthouse has four five-foot dials. The massive clock was originally driven by 600 pounds of weights and a pendulum. The bell was cast in 1910 by the Seth Thomas Clock Company. Some years after the clock was installed it was converted to electricity and continues to use electric power.

THE HAHN PNEUMATIC CLOCK SYSTEM

The rare Hahn Pneumatic Clock system inside the courthouse, located in the rotunda, drives eight Slave Clocks and was installed when the courthouse was built, 1909-1912.

The clock system consists of three distinct parts. The Master Clock furnishes the pneumatic power and keeps the time. The Secondary Clocks, or Slave Clocks, receives the impulse every two minutes from the Master Clock and advance in step with it. The Pipe Line, consists of tubing to distribute air to the Slave Clocks. The average pressure required to operate the system is from one to two ounces.

Boone County Courthouse Retaining Wall (1980)

In 1899 Boone County Commissioners ordered a coping or retaining wall placed around the courthouse lawn. The coping was to be 14 inches high, 12 inches thick with 14 inch square posts at intervals, the posts to be two feet higher than the coping. Norton and Gilmore, a Terre Haute construction firm, was awarded the bid at \$690.50.

When the old wall was first placed around the courthouse lawn, it served as a fence. Ten years after the wall was set in place, the present courthouse was built and the lawn was filled; thus the fence became a retaining wall.

Time took its toll on this wall, requiring it to be repaired at various times. In honor of Boone County's Sesquicentennial year, the Boone County Historical Society sponsored a community project to replace the 81 year-old wall. The dedication of the new wall took place July 5, 1980.

The project was financed by selling "Buckets of Cement" for \$2.00 per bucket. As community pride was aroused, "Buckets of Cement" money began to pour in.

The engineering firm of Beem, Longest and Neff, Inc. had drawings of the proposed new retaining wall with a current cost estimate of \$45,129. V.L. Pennington, Inc. was named Project Coordinator.

The wall made of bridge mix concrete with limestone aggregate, was poured in place using braced plyform sections, taking 137½ yards of concrete. The entire depth of the wall is 48 inches with 24 inches above the sidewalk. The length of the wall is 820 feet with 14 corner posts measuring 16 inches square, rising 29 ½ inches above the sidewalk. Professionals and volunteers worked on the site 31 days, clocking a combined total of 1388 ½ man hours of labor. This does not include the hours worked by the highway department in taking out the old wall and hauling dirt or fill.

On July 3rd the final touches were made to the new retaining wall. What to many seemed an impossible task was completed. An early estimate of replacing the retaining wall was \$50,000. The original estimate was reduced to \$25,000 by the work of the Boone County Highway Department. The estimate was further reduced by the donations of at-cost wages, materials, volunteer labor and total community involvement, so that the actual

cost of constructing the wall was \$19,830.58. The "Buckets of Cement" fund raising project collected \$19,957.32, thus saving the taxpayers of Boone County an estimated \$30,168.42.

MEMORIALS OF THE LAWN

A Memorial in Memory of Revolutionary Soldiers
Buried in Boone County

A Memorial in Memory of Boone County Veterans
of World War I, World War II, Korean War and
Vietnam War

Freedom Flame
A constant reminder of our greatest heritage

The Ten Commandments

Corner Stone of Our Third Courthouse

*Information compiled from records of
Boone County History.*